2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

to the bride-wealth of her brother's son. She may demand the cattle for her brother's son from her own husband, and he will always give them; should he refuse she might threaten to leave him. We were told that a boy who had no *waja*, *nywaja*, or sister, would be poor indeed. The two latter do not actually contribute, but in the lad's position of *una* to his *nywaja* and brother to his sister he gets a portion of the bride-wealth given on their marriage.

We could obtain little reliable information relating to age-classes or similar organizations, and formed the opinion that the institution was of little importance and was probably dying out, and that neither knocking out teeth or scarring the forehead could properly be regarded as a puberty rite.[1] Both girls and boys—except the royal family down to the *kwanyireth*—have the four lower incisors knocked out, but no reason could be discovered. Mr. Heasty informs us that the lower milk incisors are taken out—or the young teeth may be burnt away—in babies so young that the teeth may not have come through the gum. This is done both by *kwareth* and commoners, lest the child should become ill or die. The permanent teeth are removed in the tenth or eleventh year and buried near the parents' house. Girls and boys are treated separately in groups, but we could not discover that the operation gave rise to any social bond. Here we may add that to knock out a man's front teeth (presumably this refers to the upper jaw) is considered a grave offence, and in the old days a fine of ten head of cattle was imposed.

Foreheads are scarred at much the same age or a little later, two or three lines of scars, called *tai*, being made, which in the young stand out like beads across the brow and are regarded as greatly enhancing the appearance. This also is done in groups by some man who is expert at the work. Forehead scarring seems to come nearer to being an initiation ceremony in the common use of the term, and at this period the lads cease to sleep in their parents' hut, they go to the cattle byre and beat the drums and take full part in the dances. It is true that lads do dance before this, but rather in play and more as imitators than participators, whereas after head scarring the dance becomes an important occupation with great social significance, for when a lad dances with the warriors he is considered a man. Though age-classes have not the obvious social importance that they have among Nuer and Dinka, lads scarred at the same time were

[1] Mr. Heasty notes that in the neighbourhood of Doleib Hill there have been no new age-classes for many years.

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23.

grouped together in battle, and still eat together ceremoniously, e.g. at mourning feasts. The *kwanyireth* have their foreheads scarred in the same manner as commoners. Lines of scar marks are also made on the breast, across the shoulder blade, and two rectangular masses above the umbilicus; these are considered to have no tribal significance but are done for the sake of adornment and are said to be admired by the opposite sex.

We are indebted to Mr. Heasty for a note on Shilluk customs, which seem to indicate that the milk avoidances of the Nilotes are dependent on fear of contamination associated with the sexual act.

A young woman does not drink milk under any circumstances, though a woman who is nursing a baby may, as do old women past the reproductive age. Only small boys herd the cattle and milk them, for once a boy has reached maturity there is the danger that he may have had sexual contact, when if he milked, or handled manure, or even walked among the cattle in their pens, he would cause them to become sterile. These beliefs are held so strongly that a child who goes to his neighbours to drink milk must have a bath before he returns home, lest milk might adhere to him, be mixed with food, and be eaten by someone who was unclean. If a man has had sexual relations with his wife or another he is considered unclean and does not drink milk until the sun has set the following day. Mr. Heasty could not discover that anyone objected to drinking milk drawn by himself, nor does anyone avoid taking milk and meat together. The pottery vessels used for milk are not used for any other purpose.

A woman cooks for her husband and leaves the hut while he eats, but it is not shameful for men and women to be seen eating together, and after a man has eaten the main part of a meal a woman and her friends, usually her unmarried *nyiwa* (if her *gol* is not distant), may sit and eat while he continues his meal. A newly married couple do not eat together. Small reed mats called *paro* are used to put over pots of food to keep off flies and dust, and out of respect a woman might stand one of these upright to screen her face while eating or drinking.

643 778 of the newly elected *reth* Nyikang and Dak are brought in procession from Akurwa to Fashoda with their priests to test the new *reth*.

182 631 643 541 The conventional opposition between northern and southern divisions now becomes apparent. The forces of the southern province flock to support the *reth*-elect and wait at Dabalo settlement while Nyikang and his supporters assemble at Adodo. The two armies then march to Khor Arepajur and a mock battle takes place with millet stalks instead of spears. Nyikang captures the *reth*-elect and there is a procession to the shrine of Nyikang at Fashoda. Certain ceremonies of a mystic nature follow, which are not participated in by the whole people, as are the procession and battle. The image of Nyikang is placed on the royal stool, then the king-elect sits on it and the spirit of Nyikang is believed to enter into him, and possess him causing him to tremble.

A few days later a second mock battle occurs between the king's supporters and Nyikang. The *reth* is victorious, for Nyikang has taken possession of him and the effigy is now merely the symbol of Nyikang and no longer the repository of his spirit. . In a final ceremony all the important chiefs and elders from all parts of Shillukland declare their allegiance to the new *reth*.

182 643 The installation ceremonies of the *reth* and the traditions relating to Nyikang show how, at every point, the structure and political organisation of the Shilluk people is confirmed by ritual and by mystic symbols.

643 669 All rebellions and revolts are directed against the king in person and not against the kingship itself. The unity of the Shilluk is such that the various segments of the country can be represented by the common symbol of the *reth*-ship. Nevertheless, there are powerful tendencies towards fission within the structure. As has been shown, the kingship is the subject of competition on the part of the *nyireth* candidates supported by chiefs and forces available from their territories.

171 Of all the Nilotic groups for which there is any considerable information, the Shilluk alone form a single political unit, or nation, as opposed to a number of separate tribes or tribal groups which are culturally similar but not politically unified. At the same time, the principles of their political structure and social organisation are similar in many respects to those of the rest of the Nilotes, in particular the Anuak.

AGE SETS

114 Apart from a brief mention by Hofmayr, the only information concerning the Shilluk age sets is contained in Howell's article in *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1941, Vol.XXIV.

54 [887] On reaching puberty a Shilluk boy is initiated into the age-set organisation. A Shilluk age set is known as *ric* and is made up of three or more subdivisions each consisting of men of approximately the same age, who have herded cattle together as boys. A man always remains in the subdivision into which he has been initiated, but a periodical shuffling of the subdivisions alters their respective positions in an age set and the whole age-set organisation. A reorganisation of the groups of subdivisions

182 561 621 from the fact that the *jago*, elders of the *dyil* clan, and other lineage representatives, hold political authority quite apart from the age organisation. The age sets take no part in disputes within the settlement, but when the settlement as a whole goes to war the warriors "... are mobilised into age sets."(1) Howell suggests that formerly the age organisation had special military functions, but whether this was so or not, the age sets seem to fulfil a more peaceful purpose today, and form a useful basis for organising the relations of generations for social purposes.

The Ngol Ceremony

561 624 At the *ngol* ceremony a war leader *(ban)* is elected. The *ban* has no administrative or political functions. His duties consist in organising the mobilisation of the warriors and presiding at communal feasts at which people assemble in age sets. His age mates may assist him in his cultivations. After the *ngol* ceremony each age set is given a new name.

Initiation

561 ●881 There are no elaborate rites of initiation among the Shilluk. Participation in a dance, the *cong bul* marks the initiation of a youth in the age organisation. The *cong bul* is a social affair which is arranged periodically with the permission of the *jago* of the settlement. It is not a ceremony of initiation in the normal sense but merely a formal recognition by the community that a lad has reached adult status and can take part in a man's obligations and privileges. Previous to the *cong bul* a youth is restricted in that he may not fight with spears, take part in war or in any dance other than one held for children. Before the *cong bul* he is not allowed to wear certain kinds of ornaments.

The *cong bul* is attended by a boy when he is 14-16 years old, or earlier if he has to take over the duties of family head through the death of his father. A youth normally obtains his father's permission and another man is appointed to act as his sponsor. The sponsor ceremonially adorns the youth with ornaments before he enters the dance. At the beginning of the dance the warriors salute the *jago*, advance in formation and fling themselves before him.

[553 556] At the time of the *cong bul* the initiated is usually presented with two spears by his father. Rich men give their sons an ox and they take their ox-names from these animals. An ox so given is kept until it dies and then a new one of the same colour is substituted. After the *cong bul* the initiates visit relatives and travel round the countryside for a few months.

CLANS AND LINEAGES

614 There are about a hundred patrilineal clans in Shillukland. Each clan has a name which is preceded by the word *kwar*, meaning 'descendants of'. All clansmen trace their descent from a common ancestor. They are bound by distinct rules of behaviour, by special observances and are exogamous.(2)

613 614 The Shilluk clans, like all Nilotic clans, are dispersed, each clan

(1) Howell, *S.N.R.* 1941, Vol.XXIV, p.57. (2) *Ibid.*, p.47.

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

Many things are denied to the young man who has not been properly initiated. He cannot take part in the formal dances, though he may join in the moonlight dances of the children. He is debarred from that pursuit so dear to the heart of the small boy, that is, he is not permitted to go to their tribal fights. However, he enjoys immunity from danger in these fights, as women and boys who have not danced are placed in the same class; it is a disgrace to kill them. In the few cases that I have known of small lads being killed, the ones who did the killing insisted that it was a mistake—that either the weapon had miscarried or they had mistaken the lad for someone else. Some timid lads may delay their initiation through fear, but to the majority it is a challenge to claim the full rights of men. The boy who has not danced is not permitted to wear the large necklaces made from the heavy hairs of the giraffe tail. He may wear a band of a few hairs, but the large ones called wĭn are forbidden to him. He is also forbidden to wear the rek, the beads made from the eggshell of the ostrich. He is not permitted to use "ajǫ̈ṅo" on his hair. This is a brick-like substance made by taking the cleaning from the floor of the stable in the morning, and then dried cow dung is put with it, and the resulting mixture is made into a loaf and burned with cow dung. It has a brick-like appearance when finished. It is then powdered. The young man puts oil on his head. The dust is poured on his head, and he keeps shaking his head to get it to form little balls. Other red preparations for the head may be used by the small boys. The lad who has not danced is not permitted to wear the skins of the various members of the cat tribe that the men wear at fights and dances. Finally, he is not permitted to make a formal call on the young ladies until after he has danced, and he is not granted any political rights in the village council.

The ages at the time of initiation vary. A strong lad is initiated at an earlier age than a weakling. The older men say that boys dance at an earlier age than they did formerly. The average age now is perhaps fifteen years. Some of the older men say it used to be at least twenty years. When all the older males in a family are dead a boy may be initiated younger so that he can inherit the property of his father, and also to give the family representation in the civic life of the village. Initiations may occur at both the spring and autumn dances. Those initiated the same year have a feeling of relationship for others of the same

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

561 class. In the fights the last class to be initiated is placed in the rear, and the other men endeavour to protect them. The older men fear [701] that if these lads, who are still novices, should be wounded they might [724] cry out in their suffering and weaken the hearts of the older fighting men.

When a young man feels that he is old enough to dance, he usually ● 881 goes to his father or guardian and asks permission. If the father gives his consent, the lad gets the ostrich eggshell beads (rek) and the dancing skin (okwar). He may also get the giraffe tail necklace (wīn). Then when a dance occurs in some near-by village he adorns himself with all the ornaments that he can get. The skin and the beads must be tied on him with ceremony the first time. The lad selects a man who is popular with the ladies in the mixed dances, and asks him to tie them on him. The man who performs the ceremony takes a string of the ostrich beads and places them about the waist of the lad, as though he expected to tie the rek in place. He then lets it drop almost to the ground, and then brings it again to the waist of the lad. Three times he acts as though he would tie it, and then lets it down again. Then the fourth time he actually ties the string. The skin is tied in the same way. After the skin and beads have been tied once, the young man may tie them for himself on later occasions.

Sometimes the parental permission is not given for the son to dance. 593 The father feels that he is too young to dance. He says, " You are too 881 small and weak, and in a battle you would be killed." Sometimes the son heeds the advice of his father, and waits until he is older and is able to dance with the consent of his father. Other young fellows are more determined, and such a one goes to some man to get him to tie his skin and beads. He usually goes to a man of some other village, because the men of his own village would not care to offend his father. The man usually asks the young man if his father consents, and the son says that he does not. He goes from one to another till he finds a man who will act for him. The ceremony is binding in spite of the father's objections, and the young man cannot be released from his responsibilities. When a boy has danced in defiance to the wishes of his father he does not feel so brave after the period of dancing is over, and he asks someone to go with him to " soften his father." The intercessor kneels before the father with the boy behind him, and he says, " The boy went to a dance. You refused,

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

but he grasped it. He asked me to come and see if you are displeased. I have brought him, I give him to you. He is not the only one who has done such a thing, for even of old our boys have so done." If the father says, "I refused because he was small, but I am not angry," the affair is settled, and the boy returns to his home. If the father is angry, and refuses to be reconciled the boy goes home with his friend. The friend then undertakes to make a reconciliation. He gives the father a present, which is usually a sheep or a spear. If the present is refused he will send other and greater presents until the father accepts, and the acceptance implies that the son has been forgiven.

Young men who are initiated to the dance the same year usually have a kindred feeling for each other. When the village goes forth to battle, the ones initiated last and the old men are supposed to be in the rear, so that they will be protected by the stronger fighting men. In a fight, men who have been initiated the same year usually keep together, though that is not always the case. When a feud begins between two villages there are men in each faction who were initiated the same year. While the men go forth by villages, yet their fights are broken up into a number of personal combats. Many men refuse to contend against men who were initiated in their class, and when they find themselves near such men, they move on to seek different foes. On the other hand, others seek to engage men of their own class. Perhaps they follow the analogy of a family, for the most bitter fighting occurs when a family is divided.

After the young man is prepared for the dance he joins the young men of his village who are going to the dance, though he must keep in the rear. In the dances the men go through a regular form, which is largely military in nature. The novice takes part in all of these movements though he must keep to the rear. Then the mixed dances begin, and then comes the real test for the young man. In the mixed dances the woman asks the man to be her partner. Happy indeed is the young man who is asked by some woman at his first dance. He says of the first woman who asks him to dance, "She cut my cloth (kǭk lanā)." In that he refers to the skin he wears. The woman who asks him to dance cannot be a relative, nor may she be a married woman, though a girl who is engaged may ask him to dance. It is preferred that the girl asking him to dance should belong to a different sub-tribe (kwā).

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

After a boy has danced for a year or two, he may dance with a married woman who has no children. After another lapse of time he is eligible to dance with the mother of one child, and so on until he is eligible to dance with any woman. A man never dances with his own wife. Often the girl who first dances with a boy is in love with him, and sometimes they later get married. Such marriages are usually happy. If a young man is not asked by a girl to dance with her within two or three years of his initiation, it is not likely that any girl will ask him to dance with her, as the other girls would ridicule her for dancing with an unpopular man. Such a man usually experiences difficulty in getting a wife, as no woman wants to marry a man who is unpopular with the women. The mother of the young man who has been asked to dance prepares a feast for the girl who asked him to dance, and sometimes the girl prepares a return feast for the young man and some of his friends. Many an old man speaks with great respect of the girl who first asked him to dance. When a man is dancing with a woman he calls her (cīgā) " my wife."

If a boy makes unseemly haste to call on the young ladies after his initiation, his father is angry, and says, " Is your reason for dancing to get the right to call on the women ? "

After a boy has danced he takes a second name. He may choose his own name, often from something he has done, or from a cow he has bought. If he cannot think of a suitable name he may ask his friends for suggestions. In some cases an older man may go to him and say, " Do you have a name ? " If he replies in the negative, the man may make a suggestion. The boy does not announce his name to his parents. They may hear his young friends call him by his new name, and they ask, " Is that his name now ? "

If a man dies leaving only a small son who has not danced, they say, " His property is on the ground (jumę̱ ya pi̱ñ). Later when the boy has danced, they say his property has been inherited (alukę̱).

People who are of the same age are called (ti̱i̱ñ ayą̱j). They are expected to help each other.

The girls may dance when they are very small, but they must wear a sheep-skin. Later, when the girl is larger, and her breasts begin to develop (ti̱ne̱ atwi̱) she wears a calf-skin, which is supplied her by her father. If she has no father or close male relative to get her a calf-skin, she will wear the sheep-skin until she is married, and then her husband

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

will get her a calf-skin. The mother of the girl is supposed to tie the calf-skin the first time the girl wears it to a dance. If her mother is dead, then a woman the same age as her mother ties it for her.

Some Begging Customs of the Women.

The Shilluk women seem to derive much pleasure from begging for cattle from some of the richer men of the tribe. The occasion is made a holiday for the women of the village, and they go forth in their finest clothes. If the recipient of their honour lives at some distance, the start is made early in the morning, and all the women of the village go. If there are too many women in the village, then the women of a certain age go. The women of two different villages will not unite to go on these expeditions. The proper season for these begging dances is just before the rains begin, though they may be held any time during the dry season.

The women decide upon the man to be honoured by their party before they start. Occasionally, they honour a man from their own village, but in that case they only ask for a sheep. Often they go five or six miles, and sometimes they go as far as fifteen or twenty miles. While they are gone the men must stay at home to care for the babies. Often, on such occasions, a mother will leave a tiny baby at home for the whole day. Usually, they object to leaving their babies at home, but for this event it is different.

The man to be honoured is not warned, lest he hide from them. Should the man they are seeking be absent from the village, the women hang a string of beads made from the shell of the ostrich egg (rek) in the enclosure between his two houses. When he returns, he says, "Who brought this rek?" His wife replies, "The women brought it." He asks, "What do they want?" His wife replies, "An ox." His wife says "They will return." He says, "They will find nothing." His wife replies, "So many should have something, I have children, so many women should not be refused by red lips." When the women return they usually get the ox.

Before the women start on such a trip they choose a leader, unless they already have one. She is called a baña. She has the powers of a magistrate. If any trouble occurs among the women, she acts as judge. She is crowned with the rek, as the chief of the village is crowned. In

18: Howell E-5 (1937) 1941 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

slaughtered at the *Ngol*. This name is shouted when entering battle, though there are other war-cries associated with each age-set.

Among the Shilluk there are no elaborate and prolonged *rites de passage* through which the youths acquire manhood status and there are no separate ceremonies associated with their recruitment to an age-set. The final act of initiation is participation in a *Cong Bul*, or dance, and the preparations required to do so. The *Cong Bul* is purely a social dance which is arranged from time to time by permission of the *Jago* of the settlement and has no basic religious significance associated with change of status or with age-sets. It is not in itself a ceremony of initiation. To the young boy, then, to dance for the first time is merely a qualificatory rite by which he is recognised in his adult status—a symbol of reintegration to the community after a short period of segregation. Previous to his first dance, he is subject to certain restrictions. He may not fight with spears, nor take part in large-scale warfare or extra-tribal raids. He may not take part in any dances save in the moonlight festivities held by young people only. Further he is not allowed to wear certain kinds of clothing and ornaments, notably large necklaces of giraffe-hair, ostrich-egg beads, and cat skins and he may not adorn his hair with mud. A breach of conduct would be met with bitter ridicule, particularly by the girls, and no youth would dare to disregard the warning of his elders. All these restrictions and many more are removed at the time of the first *Cong Bul* attended by the initiate and indeed are noticably broken at the ceremony itself. The initiates wear the forbidden ornaments and carry spears.

Normally three or four boys from the same settlement are initiated together, but several of such batches may undergo the transitional rites in one year. Participation in his first *Cong* usually occurs when the boy is from fourteen to sixteen, but a youth may undergo the rites at an earlier age, if his father is dead and it is necessary to accelerate his change of status so that he can represent his family—especially if he has no elder brothers. When a youth has obtained his father's permission to undergo initiation, he acquires the necessary ostrich-egg beads and cat-skin and takes these to a man who is appointed his sponsor. The qualification for such a tutorial position is apparently popularity

18: Howell E-5 (1937) 1941 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

881 with girls. This man ceremonially ties on the youths dancing ornaments before he enters the dance and accompanies him to the dancing ground.

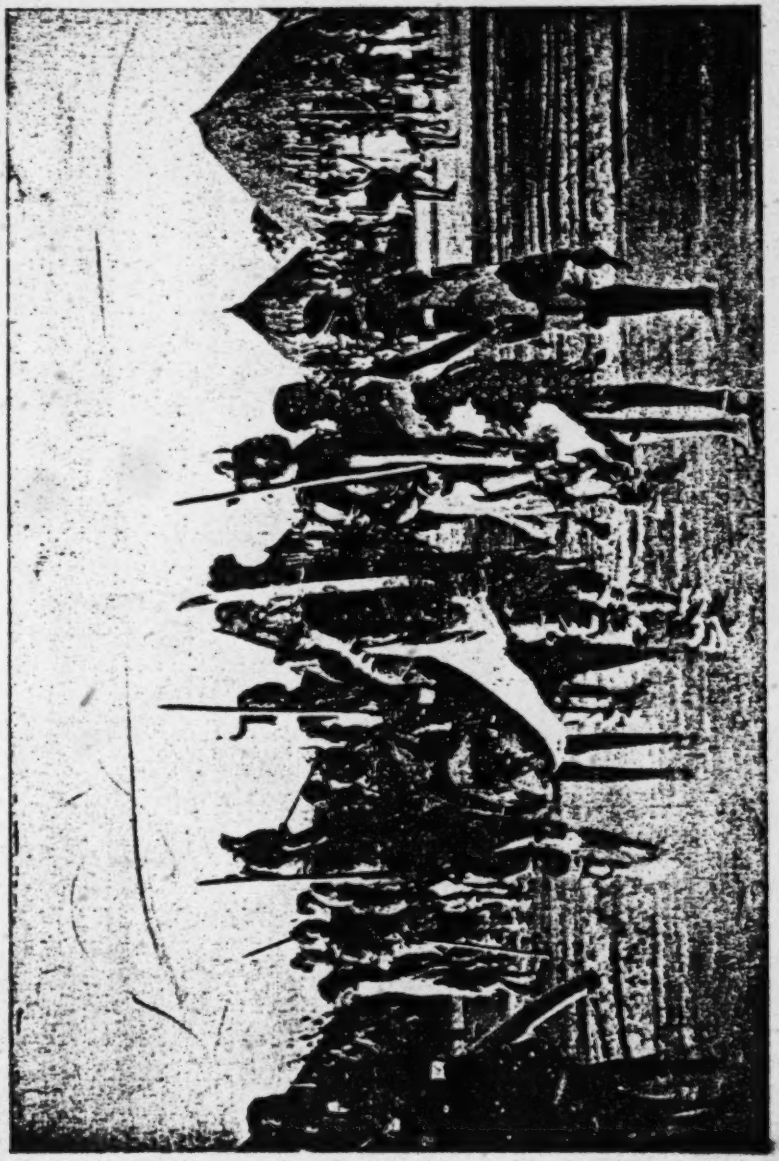
On the morning of the *Cong*, the candidate is taken with his companions to an *Ajwogo* or priest who performs certain rites with them before they continue on their way to the gathering. On their arrival at the village where the *Cong* is being held, the initiates form up two abreast and remain in the charge of their sponsor until the actual dancing begins. After this they enter the dance in the normal way, joining the ranks of the warriors who have certain acts of politeness to the *Jago* to perform before they are chosen as partners by the girls.

535 881 [534] The *Cong* takes place about four o'clock in the afternoon when the heat is less oppressive and the population of the district has finished work in the fields. The drum (often two, "*Bul Dwong*" and "*Bul Thin*") is placed on a wooden structure in the centre of the village. The drummer begins to call the local inhabitants together long before any dancing is due to take place and beats furiously on the drum at varying intervals. Women and those who are too old to dance assemble round the huts, gossiping and drinking merissa with the occupants. [554] The important men of the settlement, the *Jak* and their assistants and a few of the most respected elders assemble near to the hut of the *Jago* who offers them refreshment and tobacco. Meanwhile the warriors arrive in small batches, and stand outside the village. The normal [241] "*Lau*" of cloth is discarded and they put on skins fastened from their waists and ornament themselves with their special dancing beads and sashes. They carry with them their best spears, but not the fighting [411] shield, for the *Cong* has no military associations. Some have small [714] shields of hippo or crocodile skin make in miniature imitation of the heavy war shield, but the majority carry parrying-sticks or "stick-shields." Some wear strings of small bells wound crosswise round [301] their legs.

When the final touches have been put to their clothing, small groups of warriors enter the dancing ground in the centre of the village, shouting as they come. They shamble and jump round the drum and then disperse in small groups, while other warriors are assembling. When large groups have collected, after more salutations to the drum,

18: Howell E-5 (1937) 1941 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

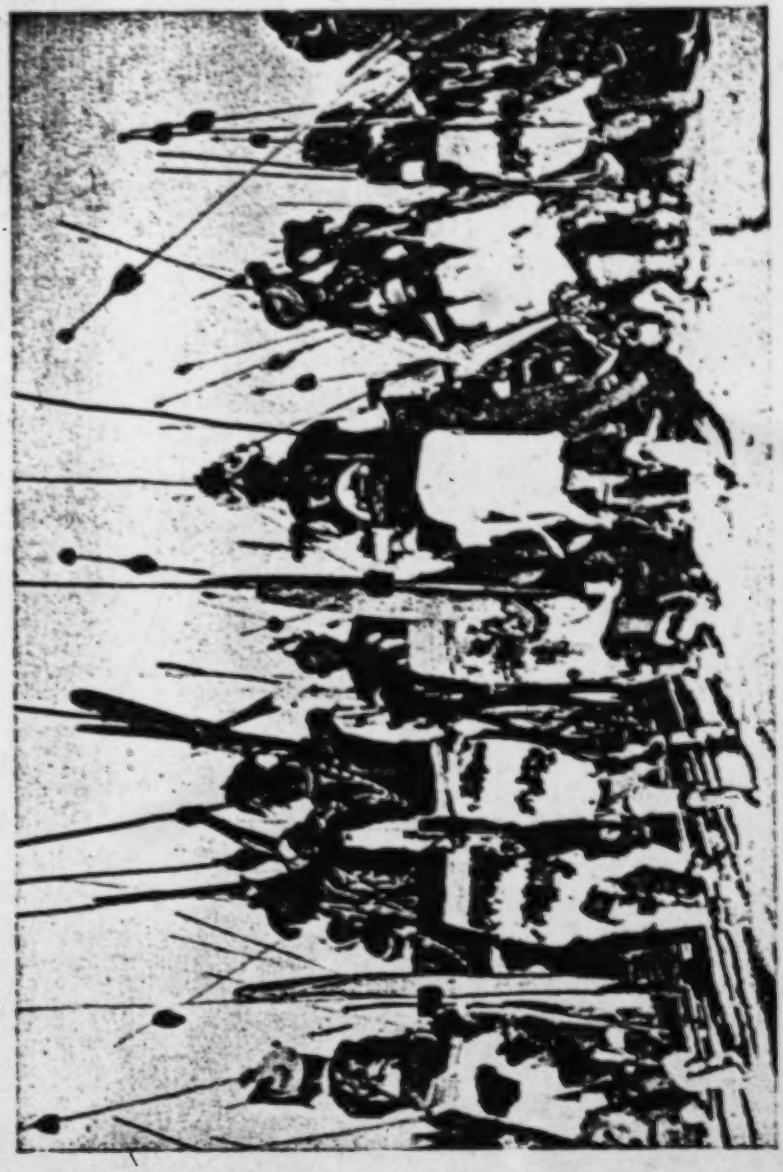
535
881



The Dance in Progress.

18: Howell E-5 (1937) 1941 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

535
881
411

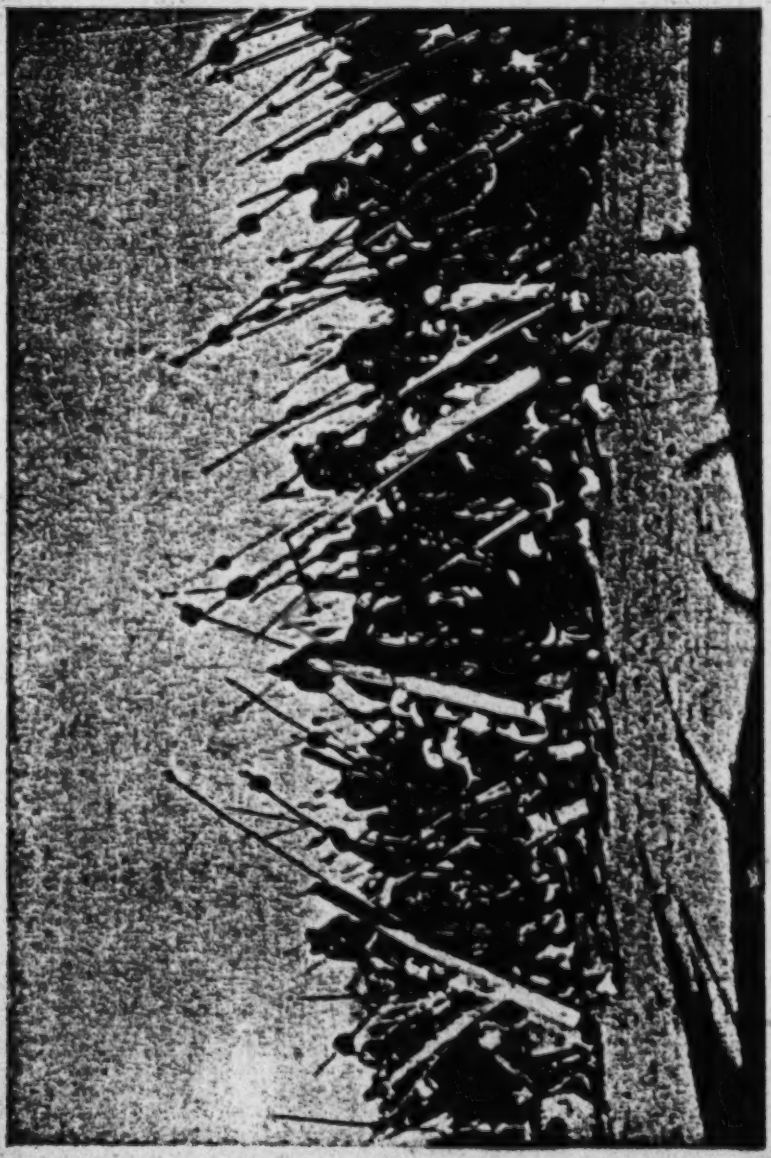


Warriors salute the Drum.

[p.62 B]

18: Howell E-5 (1937) 1941 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

535
881

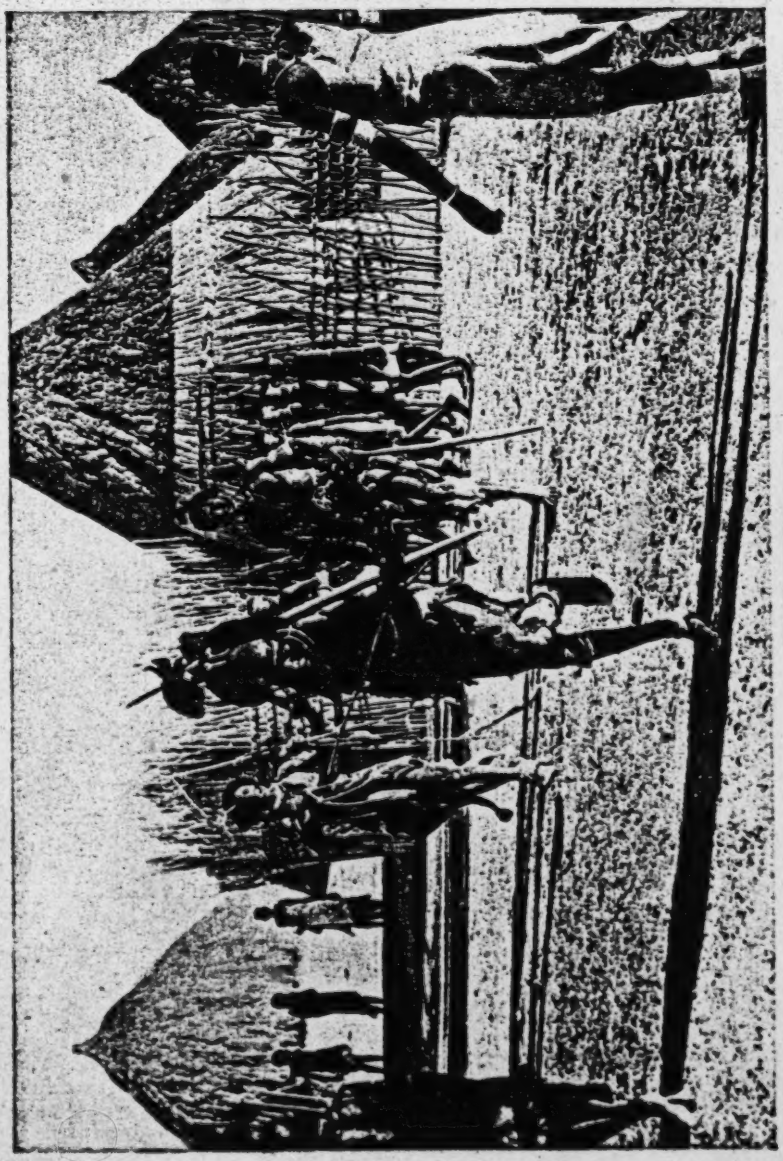


Warriors salute the Chief.

[p. 62 c]

18: Howell E-5 (1937) 1941 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

342
535
881
351
291



[p. 62 D]

18: Howell E-5 (1937) 1941 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

they advance in formation towards the *Jago's* hut, quicker and quicker until in a wild rush they fling themselves as one body before the chief. When all the warriors have saluted the *Jago*, they retire for further rearrangement of their dress and this time they put away their spears. Armed with sticks and small shields only, they form a circle, two abreast round the drum. The girls now appear on the dancing-ground, and in two's or three's wander round the circle of waiting men, choosing their partners by a point of the hand or a discreet nod of the head. The choice of a partner is entirely the prerogative of the girl and the man has no say in the matter. He cannot refuse. It is a point of honour to the initiate that he should be chosen by some girl, for to dance with a girl is part of the ceremony and if ignored he would be the subject of many sarcastic witticisms afterwards. 535 881

Warriors and their partners then arrange themselves in groups of eight or ten, the men two abreast facing the girls who always dance backwards. In the actual dance, these groups advance anti-clockwise, hopping on both legs in time to rhythm. The head is held erect, the men with their arms flexed, holding in one hand a dancing stick, while the girls dance with their hands at their sides. There is no variation of this formation, other than an occasional raising of the hands above the head by the group as a whole.

While the dance is proceeding, the audience is entertained further by various individuals who greatly to their own enjoyment imitate animals or individuals of neighbouring tribes. The Shilluk are born mimers and every conceivable trick is devised. Thus at one *Cong*, the on-lookers were amused to see the arrival of a wild and unruly bull accompanied by two exasperated herdsmen who eventually succeeded in lassoing it, after it had charged and scattered the crowd. In another corner a hyena was craftily dragging away an old mat representing the corpse of a goat. Current events are also acted and although the side-shows have no connection with the *Cong Bul* itself, they are very popular with the guests and those who are clever at miming enjoy great prestige. 535 536 881 [554]

The *Cong Bul* lasts for about two hours. Shortly before sunset the drum ceases to beat in rhythm and the exhausted dancers hastily 535 881

18: Howell E-5 (1937) 1941 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

535 leave the dancing ground. Within a few minutes the village is clear
881 of all guests, those who are unable to stand being swept along in the rush.

Before dancing for the first time the initiate is usually presented
881 with two spears by his father. The sons of rich men are presented
431 with a bull (*Walh Owono*) as well.[8] This bull is treated with great care
[563] and affection by the young warrior and he is given a new name by his age-mates—taken from the colour of the bull and they alone may call him so. Theoretically the bull is kept throughout his life, a new
[583] one of similar colour and markings being substituted when it dies. It is never given as bride-wealth. The initiates then visit their relatives
881 in the settlement and after a short period of travel return home. In
574 the past these visits were probably on a wider scale and according to Hofmayer "after the dance it is the custom for the Shilluk initiates
[114 to lead a nomadic life for a time, traversing the country from one end
171] to the other." This statement is probably an exaggeration, but a period of wandering visits is common among African peoples before final reintegration into the community in adult status.

At the *Cong Bul*, initiates are introduced to their new privileges
535 together, but the rest of the warriors are not drawn up in age-sets.
764 At the "*Kwogo*" and "*Yok*," which are funeral ceremonies, the male
881 Shilluk are organized according to their respective age-sets. There
561 are few other occasions when the age-set system functions at all.

476 Among the Shilluk the more arduous processes of cultivation are
561 carried out communally. A man will invite his neighbours and relatives to help him in his fields and will provide merissa for them afterwards. The helpers are not necessarily his age-mates and it does not appear

[178] 8. The Shilluk say that the custom is dying out and that few fathers have bulls to spare. In any case the youth will take the name of one of his father's bulls. The *Walh Owono* is a source of great pride to its owner and songs are composed about it which are sung for the benefit of girls.

An approximate translation of the song of Ajak, an inhabitant of the Zeraf mouth is as follows:

"I have a grey bull, a great bull,
I am going to Golbaign to buy a bell,
A bell for the bull that lives in
My fathers byre."

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

the roar of voices and the clashing of weapons might well make him apprehensive that he would soon find himself on the scene of a bloody battle between two rival villages. However, the reality would prove such fears unfounded, for he would merely discover that the dance was on, and that Shilluk youth was taking an afternoon off to enjoy itself. The Shilluk is fonder of dancing, we may suppose, than of anything else in the world. He will walk, or rather run and leap and jump, for miles to a place where dancing is to take place; and as he goes along he will lift his unmusical voice in raucous song, or give vent to blood-curdling whoops, springing high into the air and lunging with his spear at imaginary foes. Then for the next two or three hours he will bruise his great flat feet by pounding them on the ground, and yell himself hoarse, yet return home at the end of it not a bit less exuberant than when he set off. It may be the rainy season when the food stores are at their lowest level, and he will return home to a damp, fireless hut and an empty food bowl, but he does not mind; if he cannot eat and drink, at least he can make merry, and the dance will continue tomorrow and the day after too.

The day of his first dance marks a high light in the life of a Shilluk boy. Up to this he has been a wistful onlooker, a mere boy among other boys, whose occupation has been the minding of sheep and goats, the cleaning out of the cattle byre, the fetching and carrying for his betters; now, however, he has become as good as they are. He may dye his cloth as red and do up his hair as elaborately as they; carry real spears, not just some blunted cast-off a good-natured elder brother has given him; sit in council among his equals; take up his good new spear, if necessary, in defence of his village or his tribe.

On the day of the dance therefore, he attires himself with great care; his body shines with oil and is liberally powdered with red ochre; his hair is dressed in the way beloved of Shilluk youth; since 'tails' are *de rigueur* for these functions, he wears them: an antelope skin bound round his waist by a coloured sash with two strips of skin from the legs hanging

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

down at the back; round his neck, instead of a white tie, he wears a collar of discs cut from the shell of an ostrich egg and a necklet of hair from the tail of a giraffe; his face is painted in some tasteful design in red, white and blue; his arms are loaded with all the beads he possesses or can beg, borrow or steal, and if he can fasten a large clanging bell to one elbow, he is extra pleased; his legs are cross-gartered with strings of metal shells, the size and shape of mussel shells, which give a most satisfying clashing sound when he moves; in his right hand he carries the three-foot long dancing stick of brown wood adorned at the top with two lugs of leather, in his left he grasps his dancing shield, a short, thick cylinder of ambach wood. Thus accoutred, he takes his beautiful new spear in the hand which holds the dancing stick, and with great pride sets out, surrounded by a bevy of admiring females, to join a number of his fellow dancers. Some of these are neophytes like himself, others have long since tasted the sweetness of the initiation dance, but all are picturesquely garbed and bedecked in the same way. In single file they proceed, running and yelling, leaping and whooping, towards the distant village where the drums are already beginning to throb and to which noisy throngs are converging from all sides. The girls follow on, no less excited than their brothers and sweethearts, and as they run along they give vent to their feelings in shrill ululations. They are more soberly dressed than the gorgeous males: an animal skin or a dark blue cloth is fastened on one shoulder and falls to the knees; they have anointed themselves with oil, put on their best beads, and perhaps smeared a little red dust on the top of their heads and touched up their faces with a little paint. Yet they need not worry that lack of charm or beauty will mean a lack of partners; if there are to be any wallflowers at the dance, they will be among the men, for every girl will have her beau. Nor need they have any misgivings about not knowing the correct steps; a leap upwards and backwards in time with the beat of the drums and a half turn to right and left with every dozen steps is all that is required. It is not grace of move-

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

ment so much as endurance that is called for at a Shilluk dance. 535 881

The festivities are opened by a salute of the warriors to the assembled chiefs. The leader of the band approaches carrying a bowl of dust and asks the senior chief present or the leading guest to bless the dance; he takes a little dust [788] from the bowl and sprinkles it on the ground while calling down a blessing on the gathering. Then the warriors who are congregated at the opposite end of the field thunder forward with whoops and cries, their spears uplifted to strike, the lust of killing in their eyes; they stop dead in their tracks when the spears of the front rank are but a foot away from the row of chiefs and guests, and a roar of laughter goes up if they succeed in making anyone flinch. A second wave follows the first and so on, until with the onslaught of the last group this phase of the dance ends. The beat of the drums now quickens its tempo, spears are discarded in favour of dancing sticks and ambach shields, and the girls come forward to claim partners. A girl may take part in the [562] dance almost at any age, so that little girls of not more than twelve years of age are found taking their places in the long lines being formed. The dancers arrange themselves two abreast, the boys facing the girls; the boys stand with arms bent and sticks held upright, the girls hold themselves rigid with their arms pressed close to their sides. As three hundred pairs of feet thud down in unison, the ground seems to shake and dust rises in clouds; the drums throb, feet thump, the metal shells clash and bells clang, male voices yell hoarsely and female trill—the din is indescribable. The long lines circle slowly round the dancing floor, the boys jumping forward and the girls backward; in a concerted movement the girls raise their arms as if to ward off a blow and make a turn, first to the left, then to the right, while their male partners make the same half turns, bringing their sticks and shields over the girls' heads to protect them, as it were, from the threatened attack. This movement which is done at every dozen or so steps is the only variation in the monotonous jumping of the dance. A rest is called when the drummers

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

535 are exhausted, but it is not long before the drumming is
881 renewed with fresh vigour, for there is no lack of volunteers for the privilege of supplying the rhythm required, with a rapid slap of palm or thump of stick.

If our European traveller has halted to watch the dance and stayed as long as this, he will by now be deafened by the noise, choked by the dust and made dizzy by the monotonous movements of the dancers. He will be relieved when at last he is able to make his apologies to his host, ease up his cramped legs from the cowskin on which he has been sitting and make his escape. The din will follow him along the road, until in the distance it becomes a subdued murmur and finally dies away altogether. Behind him the dance continues with unabated enthusiasm, but when the sun begins to go down behind the trees, the party breaks up, and those who took part in it, still filled with the excitement which has possessed them all the afternoon, leap and shout and sing their way homeward. For them life is good. This is only the first day of the dance; there will be another tomorrow, and the day after that. Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow—we dance!